

Life of Jesus 2012 – 2013

Elementary & Middle School versionsLesson 25 – **Crucifixion and Resurrection**

Selections from Matt. 27, 28; Mark 15, 16; Luke 23, 24; John 19, 20

April 20, 2013**Material and Student Objective:**

The people who wrote the Bible told how Jesus died and why he died. This is their story: they wrote that Jesus was hung on a cross to die so that he could take the punishment for sin ---- so that people like Peter could be forgiven if they chose; the writers went on to tell that three days after Jesus died and was buried, he arose from the dead, appeared to his disciples and many others throughout a period of forty days, and after reminding his disciples of his promise to send his Spirit to be with them, he ascended up into heaven.

Note to teachers: bring a bamboo reed as a visual aid so that students will understand what a reed is when you get to the part about Jesus being beaten and mocked. Any other visual aids will be helpful if you have them to show during the lesson.

Elementary Approach:

Down in South America there was a small tribe or group of people that was led by a chief who was a great man and whom they looked up to and respected as their leader.

The people in the tribe were poor and lived on the food they grew in little gardens. Some also raised a few chickens, which provided eggs ---- and **occasionally** ---- some meat for them to eat.

One day some people from the tribe ran up to the chief and said, “Chief! Something **awful** has happened! Someone has stolen our chickens!”

Knowing how important those chickens were to those poor families, the chief said, “This must be stopped!”

(Flip to show He must pay!) “The thief **will** be caught and will **pay** for the wrong he has done! He will be tied to the whipping post and get **ten** lashes with the whip — he will be hit ten times with that whip. Spread the word,” the chief said. “The **stealing** must **stop**!”

But in spite of the chief’s warning ---- the thief struck three more times. Each time he did, the chief made the punishment even worse: first 20 lashes ---- *(flip to show 30 lashes!)* then 30 lashes ---- and finally ----

---- the chief called a town meeting and said, “We **must** catch the thief who is stealing our peoples’ food or our people will soon starve to death. Thirty lashes are not enough! *(Flip to show His life!)* When that thief is caught — he will pay with his **life**! He will be beaten until he **dies**.”

Now to **us** ---- the death penalty may sound very serious for just stealing **chickens** — but **those** people understood that **other** people in their tribe might **die** because their food had been stolen.

Several days later the thief was **caught** stealing the chickens ---- and taken to the whipping post. When the chief heard it ---- he put on his best robe, which he only used for very important occasions — and went to the clearing in the center of the village where the thief would be given the death penalty.

But as the chief walked into the clearing and saw the thief tied to the post ---- his face went pale and his heart broke. He could not **believe** what he saw.

There — tied to the whipping post ----- was none other — than his **very** — **own** — **mother**. What could he **do**? He loved his mother so much ---- but it would have been unfair for him to change the punishment for her. The crimes that she had committed had to be paid for.

What a **horrible** situation that chief found himself in. It reminds me of a situation in the Bible,

Middle School Approach:

Back during the Viet Nam War, a small orphanage in Viet Nam that was run by missionaries was struck by a bomb and destroyed. The missionaries who ran it were killed ---- as well two village children who lived there. Several other children were hurt, including a little girl about 8 years old.

The people of the village asked the Americans for help to treat the injured children, so the Americans sent a Navy doctor and nurse to help out in any way they could.

After looking over the injured children, they realized that the little girl had the worst injury, and that unless she got a blood transfusion immediately, she would die soon. They quickly determined her blood type and began to test everyone else to find a suitable blood donor.

Neither the doctor nor the nurse had the correct blood type, but several of the Vietnamese orphans did.

The doctor spoke very little Vietnamese, and the nurse spoke very little French ---- just what she remembered from high school --- and these were the two languages the people spoke there.

*So, together, with a lot of unofficial sign language, the doctor and nurse began to try to explain to the villagers and the children how important it was to get blood into the dying girl. They asked for volunteers to donate a pint of **their** blood to save her life.*

When the doctor and nurse made their request, no one answered --- the villagers just looked at them wide-eyed. No one moved. No one spoke. The two Americans begged and pleaded with the people again, and finally after several long, uncomfortable moments, a little hand went up from the crowd of children.

The nurse grabbed the little boy whose hand went up, thanked him in French and asked him his name.

“Heng,” he said.

The nurse had Heng lie down, and then she scrubbed and swabbed his arm to prepare him for blood donation, and quickly put a needle into his vein. Through all of that, Heng never even made a whimper and just laid there stiff as a board.

But after just a few moments of watching his blood run out through the tubing connected to the needle in his arm, Heng let out a huge sob — then he quickly covered his face with his free hand.

The doctor quickly came to his side and asked, “Is it hurting, Heng?” But Heng shook his head, no. But after a few more seconds, Heng sobbed again, and tried to cover up the fact that he was crying.

The doctor asked again if the needle was hurting him, but again, Heng shook his head, no.

Soon Heng’s occasional sobs turned into steady, quiet crying — he had his eyes tightly shut, with his free hand pressed against his mouth to cover up his crying.

The doctor and nurse became very worried because they just couldn’t figure out what was going wrong — but something was very wrong.

About that time, a Vietnamese nurse arrived to help, and when she saw Heng so upset, she spoke to him quickly in Vietnamese. As she listened to his answer, she smiled gently at him and began to speak very calmly to him.

Heng stopped crying just a few seconds after the nurse began speaking to him. He quietly asked her a question and when the nurse nodded, a look of great relief came over his face and his body relaxed.

The Vietnamese nurse turned and told the Navy doctor and nurse, “Heng thought he was dying. He did not understand you — he thought you had asked him to give all of his blood ---- to give his life so the little girl could live.”

The Navy nurse asked, “But why would he be willing to give all of his blood to her?”

The Vietnamese nurse asked Heng the same question in his language, and he said, “She’s my friend. I love her.”

We don’t know how these two became such good friends ---- except that they lived together in the same orphanage. If you lived in an orphanage ---- if you didn’t have any parents or brothers or sisters ---- your friends there would be your whole family --- the people you loved. Living in the orphanage together ---- Heng and this little girl became such good friends. He loved her so much that he was willing to give his life for her. He was willing to die so she would not have to. It reminds me of the whole point of the Bible message.

Grades 1 – 8:

As many of you remember ---- the writers of Genesis ---- the first book of the Bible ---- said that the world and everything in it was created by God. They also said that the most important and most loved of God's creation ---- was the creation of the man and the woman ----

— and that these two ---- Adam and Eve ---- were **perfect** when God created them. They had never done **anything** wrong ---- and **because** they had never sinned ---- they had a perfect friendship with God.

It says God prepared a beautiful place for them to live, called the Garden of Eden, and God came there to the Garden and walked and talked with them. There were many wonderful fruit trees in the Garden that Adam and Eve could eat from ---- but God told Adam there was **one** tree in the Garden whose fruit they were **not** allowed to eat.

He warned Adam that if they disobeyed and **ate** the fruit from that **one** tree ---- they would **die**.

However, one day Adam and Eve chose to do what God said not to. They chose to disobey God. They **ate** the fruit from that **one** tree that God told them not to eat from ---- and there were **many terrible** consequences as a result of that choice.

One consequence was ---- their choice to disobey God broke their friendship with God ---- and separated them from Him ---- but God didn't want that. According to the Bible, God wanted Adam and Eve ---- and people who lived after them ---- to be able to be friends with Him.

So the theme ---- or subject ---- of the **whole rest** of the **Bible** is about how God would make a way so that people's sins could be forgiven and they could be friends with God again if they chose.

There's one of Jesus **disciples** that **you** know ---- who wanted to be forgiven ---- and it was **Peter**.

(Flip to show Jesus teaching his disciples)

You remember Peter spent three and a half years following Jesus, learning about being friends with God and about how a friend of God should act. Jesus taught him about being kind and truthful ---- and about how important it was for him to choose to do what was right. Just being **around** Jesus had helped Peter to grow and change so much.

That's why it was so awful for Peter that night when all of a sudden soldiers came to the Garden of Gethsemane and arrested Jesus. Everyone was so surprised to see that it was Judas who betrayed Jesus. Judas turned Jesus over to the leaders with a kiss. And that's when Peter's trouble started. *(Flip to show denial)*

Peter went to the courtyard outside the place where they were having Jesus' trial ---- and that's the place where Peter denied knowing Jesus. You remember ---- three times he denied Jesus ---- by saying that he did not know who Jesus was.

Afterwards, Peter must have wondered, “How could I have done that? How could I have acted as if I didn’t even know who **Jesus** — my best friend — was?”

“My friendship with Jesus is ruined because of the wrong I have done.”

Peter very likely looked on from a distance as the soldiers mistreated Jesus. The Bible says they spit on Jesus, slapped him, made fun of him, and pulled hair out from his beard. I’m sure it hurt Peter to watch this ---- but he was too scared to do anything to stop them.

Then you remember what Governor **Pilate** did to keep the angry crowd from rioting. He ordered that Jesus be **scourged** ---- **beaten** — hoping that would satisfy the crowds so that he could release Jesus.

*(Put up board work **scourged**.)*

Grades 4 – 8: *Due to the graphic nature of the following section in italics, if you have a 4th grade class that is very sensitive, skip over the section in italics.*

As history books tell us ---- what the Roman soldiers used to beat Jesus with was called a cat-of-nine tails. It was a whip with nine leather strips attached to it. And all along each leather strip they usually tied lead balls, broken pieces of pottery or sharp, jagged pieces of metal or bone.

As the Roman soldiers did with all prisoners, they would have stretched Jesus across a barrel or something so the skin on his back would have been pulled tight.

Then they would have used this whip to beat Jesus. Each time the soldier hit Jesus with it, it would have torn the flesh on Jesus back. Sometimes after the Romans beat the back of a prisoner until it was bloody and raw and cut to pieces, they often would turn the prisoner over and beat him on the stomach and chest.

Grades 1 – 8:

Sometimes the beating would be so bad the prisoner would die before he was ever nailed to the cross.

The Bible says after the soldiers **scourged** Jesus — they **mocked** him ---- they made **fun** of him. They pretended to treat him as if he were a king ---- putting a crown on his head and bowing down to him ---- but the crown was made of **thorns**.

They beat the crown down on his head with a reed — something like a piece of bamboo — then they put the reed in his hands to make it look as if he were carrying a king’s scepter.

After Jesus was scourged, Pilate brought Jesus out again and stood him in front of the screaming crowd so they could see how badly he had been beaten. Pilate was hoping that when they saw how brutally Jesus had been scourged, they would want to have him freed.

But instead ---- you remember the crowd yelled, “Give us Barabbas! Crucify Jesus! Kill him!” So — being afraid of what the people would **do** ---- **Pilate** handed Jesus over to his Roman soldiers to take him and crucify him. Some of you know that “crucify” means to hang someone on a cross to die. *(Put up board work **Crucify**)*

And if Peter was watching, he would have seen the soldiers force Jesus to carry his cross — which may have been just the crossbar --- the part of the cross to which Jesus' **hands** would soon be nailed. But even this part alone was very heavy — weighing about 125 lbs.

Grades 4 – 8: *The cross was made of rough wood – so as the soldiers shoved him around ---- those jagged edges on the wood must have cut even more into Jesus' already torn and bleeding body.*

Grades 1 – 8:

All along the way to the place where the crucifixions were held --- people had lined the streets to watch as Jesus carried that cross. However ---- because of the terrible scourging by the soldiers - --- Jesus would have been so weak that he stumbled and fell to the ground.

When the Roman soldiers saw that Jesus didn't have enough strength to carry his cross any farther ---- they chose a man from the crowd *(say this quote in a rough way)* ---- “Hey ---- you! Get over here! **Carry** this man's cross!” The man's name was Simon.

So Simon helped carry Jesus' cross outside the city of Jerusalem to a place called Golgotha ---- *(put up board work Golgotha)*

Grades 4 – 8: — which meant, “The place of a skull” — a gruesome name that fits a place of execution.

Grades 1 – 8: Some people in the crowd cried for Jesus as he struggled to Golgotha, but others laughed and made fun of him as he made his way to the top of the hill where the worst criminals were put to death.

It was about nine o'clock in the morning and Peter was probably somewhere close enough to watch the Roman soldiers nail Jesus' hands to the cross.

Grades 1 – 3: They put the nails in this part of the hands — the part of the hand we call the wrist. Then they nailed his feet to the cross ---- and then stood the cross up ---- with Jesus hanging on it.

(Go now to visual CE 5.2 – Jesus on the cross.)

Grades 4 – 8:

Due to graphic nature of the following section in italics, if you have a 4th grade class that is very sensitive, skip over the crucifixion details.

The word they used for hand meant from your fingertip to your elbow. So when the Bible says Jesus' hands were nailed to the cross it didn't mean the palms of his hands. The nails would have torn right through the palms as the weight of his body pulled down on them.

(Show picture with nail placements in hands and feet)

*They put the iron nails through the wrist area ---- which was considered by **them** to be part of the hand. The nails were huge — about eight inches long and about as thick as a pencil.*

Peter could probably hear as the soldiers hammered those huge nails until they went clear through Jesus' wrists and deep into the wooden bar. Then Jesus feet were nailed to the cross.

Remember Jesus was put on the cross at nine in the morning. The soldiers lifted Jesus' cross up and dropped it down into a hole in the ground so that it would stand upright. This would have torn the flesh around the nails in Jesus' hands and feet even more.

(Demonstrate how victims of crucifixion used their legs to help them breathe.)

Crucifixion was considered to be one the worst ways to die. As the person hung there it would get harder and harder to breathe. The reason for this was the weight of your body would cause you to drop down and that would cut off your air supply here.

The only way to get your breath would be to make yourself push your body back up with your feet and your legs. This would hurt so much because you would be pushing up with your feet and tearing the flesh around those nails even more. And every time you would push your body up to breathe, your bloody, raw back would be scraping against that rough wood and it would be so painful.

Grades 1 – 8: The Bible says that Jesus was crucified between two thieves or robbers, with one on each side of him. They were close enough to be able to talk to each other as they died on their crosses.

If Peter had been able to listen closely as the soldiers drove the nails into Jesus' hands and feet, one of the things he would have heard Jesus say was ---- "Father — **forgive** them ---- for they do not know what they are doing."

I can see Peter shaking his head in disbelief. "Did I hear Jesus right? He's praying to God to **forgive** these people ---- who are hurting him so much ---- and killing him! How can he **pray** for his **enemies** ---- the very ones who are doing this awful thing to him?"

As Jesus hung on the cross, the soldiers divided up Jesus' clothes, and then began a gambling game to see which one would get to keep Jesus' robe for himself. *(Point this out on visual.)*

Others in the crowd began to yell things at Jesus. "Yeah — you saved others, why can't you save yourself?"

"Yeah, you're supposed to be the Son of God. If you are — come on down from that cross."

The Bible says that Jesus **did** have the power to come down off the cross if he wanted to. It says that at the time of Jesus' arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane ---- when Peter cut off Malchus' ear, Jesus told his disciples, "I could ask my Father for **twelve legions** of angels — that's more than **70,000 angels** — and God would send them to help me." *(Matt. 26:53)*

But remember — from the very beginning Jesus said that he did not **come** --- to help **himself**.

As Jesus hung on the cross, one of the thieves crucified next to Jesus said, "If you're the Son of God ---- **save** yourself ---- **and** us."

But the thief on the other side of Jesus spoke up and said, "You don't know what you're saying. Don't you realize this man has done nothing wrong? We **deserve** to die on these crosses, but he does **not**."

Then this thief said to Jesus, "**Remember** me when you come into your kingdom." And Jesus said to that thief, "Today you will be **with** me in heaven."

After Jesus hung on that cross for **three** hours — at 12:00 **noon** in the very **middle** of the day — the sky got **completely** dark ---- and it stayed that way for three more hours.

At **that** time — 3:00 in the afternoon — Peter probably heard Jesus' last words as he said, "**It — is — finished!**"

But Peter probably wondered what Jesus **meant** by, "It is finished."

What was finished? Peter didn't **understand** ---- until later.

Grades 1 – 5:

However, if he had known the story about the South American Indian chief he might have understood what the Bible says Jesus meant by, "It is finished."

You remember the chief was horrified when he learned the chicken thief was his very own mother, whom he loved so much. He knew her wrong had to be paid for with death but he loved her so much and did not want her to die.

As he stood looking at her he finally realized what he would do.

The chief took off his feathered robe and laid it down. Then he walked over to the whipping post —

--- and he covered his mother's small body with his own ---- much larger body.

He then told the man to begin the beating. And the chief was beaten and beaten ---- until he died. He gave his own life for her ---- and because he took his mother's punishment ---- she could be set free. It was finished ---- the price was paid.

Even though the **chief** had not done the wrong ---- he loved his mother so **much** ---- he willingly took **her** punishment so she could be forgiven for what she had done. And according to the people who wrote the Bible ---- that was **something** like what Jesus did when he said, "It is finished."

Grades 1 – 8:

In one of the books of the Bible that Peter wrote, Peter said that Jesus' dying to take the punishment for peoples' sin ---- was finished ---- and that because of that people could be forgiven and be friends with God if they chose.

Peter must have watched with terrible sadness as the soldiers brought huge hammers to break the legs of the thieves on each side of Jesus. They did this so prisoners could not push themselves up with their legs anymore to breathe ---- and this way ---- they would soon die.

*(Demonstrate again how victims of crucifixion used their legs to help them breathe.)
(Flip to show soldier with spear)*

But when the soldiers came to break Jesus' legs ---- they realized he was already dead. So a soldier then stuck a spear into Jesus' side and the Bible says that blood and water came out ---- which proved to the soldiers that Jesus was already dead.

One of the Roman soldiers who watched how Jesus died ---- looked up and said, "Surely this man was the son of God!"

But Peter probably kept asking himself, "Why? Why did Jesus have to die?"

- Was it Judas' fault for betraying Jesus by turning him over to the enemies?
- Was it the leaders' fault for insisting that Jesus be killed?
- Was it Pilate's fault for ordering that Jesus be scourged — beaten — and crucified?
- Was it the soldiers' fault for nailing him to the cross?

Was this why this awful thing happened to Jesus? Were those the reasons why Jesus died?

Soon, Peter learned the answers. Peter said that the only reason Pilate, or the leaders or the soldiers could kill Jesus ---- was because he let them. Peter said that Jesus chose to die — that it was God's plan. Peter remembered that Jesus told them earlier ---- no one could take his life -- but he would give his life ---- willingly.

Grades 1 – 5: ---- just like the chief who willingly chose to take the punishment for his mother's crime.

Middle School: ---- just like the little Vietnamese boy ---- Heng ---- who willingly chose to die ---- to give up his life for his friend.

Grades 1 – 8:

Peter probably watched as they took Jesus' body down from the cross. He may have seen a man named Joseph of Arimathaea take Jesus' body to bury it in Joseph's own tomb.

Joseph of Arimathaea and another man named Nicodemus took Jesus' body, wrapped it in linen cloths, put spices and perfumes on it, and laid Jesus' body inside the tomb --- and then rolled the stone securely in front of the tomb.

Peter also would have seen the Roman soldiers --- who were put at the tomb to guard it to keep anyone from taking Jesus' body away.

See ---- some of the leaders had gone to Pilate and said, "This Jesus said he would rise from the dead. We don't believe it will happen, but just so his disciples can't come and steal the body and say he arose from the dead — please put soldiers there to guard the tomb." So Pilate gave the leaders some Roman soldiers to guard the tomb.

Those Roman soldiers may have laughed at how foolish it seemed to guard a man who was lying dead in the grave. But the soldiers did as they were told.

As Peter thought of Jesus being dead in that tomb, he may have been thinking, --- "Oh, man! What am I going to do? Jesus is dead! He's gone ---- and I need him. I get in the most trouble when Jesus is not with me."

Peter and the other disciples were so afraid they would also be killed that they were hiding behind locked doors.

But on Sunday morning — according to the Bible writers --- there were a lot of people who were about to get the surprise of their life.

Early Sunday morning the ground outside the tomb began to shake. It was an earthquake. Down from the sky came an angel ---- whose appearance was as bright as lightning ---- and his clothing was as white as snow.

He rolled away the stone that was covering the tomb where Jesus had been buried ---- and he sat on the stone. The angel told the people who came to the grave that Jesus was not in there any longer. He had risen from the dead and had come out of the tomb ---- alive!

Those big, strong Roman soldiers were so afraid that they fell down to the ground and lay there like a bunch of dead men. When they finally came to and got their nerve back ---- they got up and took off running as fast as they could.

Act out: Those soldiers went straight to the leaders who hated Jesus --- and can't you just hear the soldiers telling the leaders something like — "Well — all of a sudden ---- the ground started to shake — and then ---- there was this angel — and then ---- Jesus was gone!

Well after those soldiers finished telling their story, the leaders apparently realized that if this story got out ---- it could mean b-i-i-i-g trouble.

So the Bible says the leaders took a bunch of money and paid the soldiers off, saying, "If anyone asks where Jesus' body went ---- you tell them that you all fell asleep ---- and while you were sleeping ---- some of Jesus' disciple friends came and stole the body ---- and now his disciples are telling lies about Jesus coming back to life."

So the soldiers did exactly as they were told. Of course I'm not so sure that was a very **smart** thing to say ---- because how could they know anyone stole the body ---- if they were asleep? But that's the story the **soldiers** told — and they were sticking to it.

Now on that same Sunday morning — as Mary Magdalene and some of the other women were on their way to the tomb ---- they hoped the soldiers or **someone** — would help them roll the huge stone away. They wanted to go in the tomb and put more spices on Jesus' body.

But when they arrived they saw the stone **already** rolled away and an **angel** sitting on the stone.

The angel said something like, "Jesus is not here. He has risen from the dead as he said he would. He is alive. Go and tell the disciples — and **especially** — **tell Peter**." Think about that — the angel made it a **point** to say — "**Tell Peter**."

According to the Bible, Jesus really wanted Peter to know that he still cared about him and loved him — even after Peter denied that he knew Jesus. He wanted Peter to know that **now** ---- he could be forgiven.

The women were **so** excited they ran to tell the disciples.

Peter, John and the other disciples thought that the women were so sad about Jesus' death ---- that they were **seeing** things.

But Peter and John ran to the tomb **anyway** ---- to see if it was **so**. And when they **got** there and went in ---- they saw only the linen **cloths** Jesus had been wrapped up in when he was buried on Friday. The Bible writers said ---- Jesus **really** --- **was** --- **gone**. He had risen from the dead.

The writers went on to say that for the next **forty days** Jesus appeared at different times to the disciples ---- **and** to other people — even a crowd of **500** people at one time.

He also talked with Peter alone. And don't you **know** that the **first thing** Peter probably wanted to say to Jesus ---- was how **sorry** he was for **denying** him ---- for acting as if he didn't know who Jesus was. And Jesus **assured** Peter that he had **forgiven** him.

Then the writers of the Bible also said that at the end of those forty days, Jesus took his disciples up on a high mountain, and he told them he was leaving them to return to heaven. And the disciples watched as Jesus ---- right in **front** of them ---- began to lift up off the ground ---- and rise up into the air where he was taken up in a cloud to heaven. *(Flip to show Jesus ascending, and point to him going up)*

You would **think** ---- feeling left there all alone without Jesus ---- Peter would be saying ---- "Hey ---- come back here, Lord! You can't leave me! I can't make it on my own!"

But perhaps Peter **didn't** say that because of something he remembered. The Bible writers said Jesus told the disciples that after he left them he would send his own Spirit — called the Holy Spirit — to come and live **in** them --- and always be **with** them.

And next year in Bible class we will see the unbelievable difference the Bible says this made in Peter and the other followers of Jesus.